



Silicon based mid infrared SiGeSn heterostructure emitters and detectors

Greg Sun
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Principal Investigator:

Greg Sun

Engineering Department

The University of Massachusetts at Boston

Boston, MA 02125, USA

greg.sun@umb.edu

Tel: 617-287-6432

Fax: 617-287-6053

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Abstract

This Final Report presents results obtained on an eighteen-month basic research project intended to advance the science and technology of Si photonics based on SiGeSn material system with focus on plasmon-enhanced GeSn photodetectors that operate around 2.0 micron wavelength range. Approaches taken on this project include invention, numerical modeling, simulation, device design, device fabrication and characterization. Original, leading-edge contributions were made in the areas of group IV photonics for mid-infrared applications. Experimental implementation of our device design demonstrates the feasibility of detectivity enhancement of GeSn photodetectors by metal nanostructures. Such a photodetector design can be conveniently implemented in focal plane arrays in which each detector pixel operates under back illumination and the metal nanostructure sitting on top serves as the contact to readout circuits. To this end, performance of back illuminated device is studied. In addition to the collaboration with Prof. Cheng at NTU specifically funded with this grant, collaborations with other scientists in Taiwan and in U.S. have led to many interesting and important basic research advances in areas that are closely related to this project during the same period.

Introduction

The main goal of this 18-month basic research project was to advance the science and technology of silicon-based photonic devices using SiGeSn heterostructures. Such devices work in mid IR spectral range and form the foundation for mid IR photonics that enable on-chip systems for applications ranging from vibrational spectroscopy, chem/bio sensing, medical/health uses, to environmental monitoring. The collaboration between UMB and NTU has demonstrated GeSn LEDs with a direct bandgap [1] and more recently a study of strain dependence of GeSn Raman shift [2]. The effort of this project is mostly directed toward the improvement of GeSn detectors with the use of surface plasmons induced by carefully designed metal nanostructures. The goal is to replace the current mid IR detectors that are usually photo-diodes made from narrow bandgap III-V or II-VI semiconductor compounds such as InGaAs, InSb, HgCdTe (MCT) or type-II InGaAs/InGaSb superlattice. These photo-diodes are incompatible with the CMOS process and therefore cannot be easily integrated with Si electronics. The GeSn mid IR detectors developed in this project, on the other hand, are fully compatible with the CMOS process.

Approaches and Results

Building upon the previous success from the UMB-NTU collaboration on GeSn-based p-i-n photodiodes with an active GeSn layer that is almost fully strained [3], we have set forth to improve the responsivity of GeSn detectors in this project. The employed strategy is to use the surface plasmon effect to enhance the optical field in the GeSn active region which leads to increased absorption of incident photons and in turn creates electron-hole pairs that contribute to the electric current that can be detected. Specifically, we considered the use of a gold metal film perforated with a two-dimensional subwavelength hole array as the plasmonic structure to be deposited on top of the GeSn p-i-n photodetector. Such structures are capable of producing enhanced optical fields under the illumination of some wavelengths residing in its surface plasmon resonance range [4-7]. They have been used to improve the performance of quantum dot infrared photodetectors (QDIPs) [8,9]. Increased photocurrent [8] and detection wavelength selection [9] have been demonstrated.

The device structure of the GeSn p-i-n photodetector that we worked on to improve its performance is shown in Fig.1(a). There are a set of three samples all of p-i-n photodiodes that were previously produced [1]. Their measured dark I-V characteristics, measured and simulated spectral response are shown in Fig. 1(b-d).

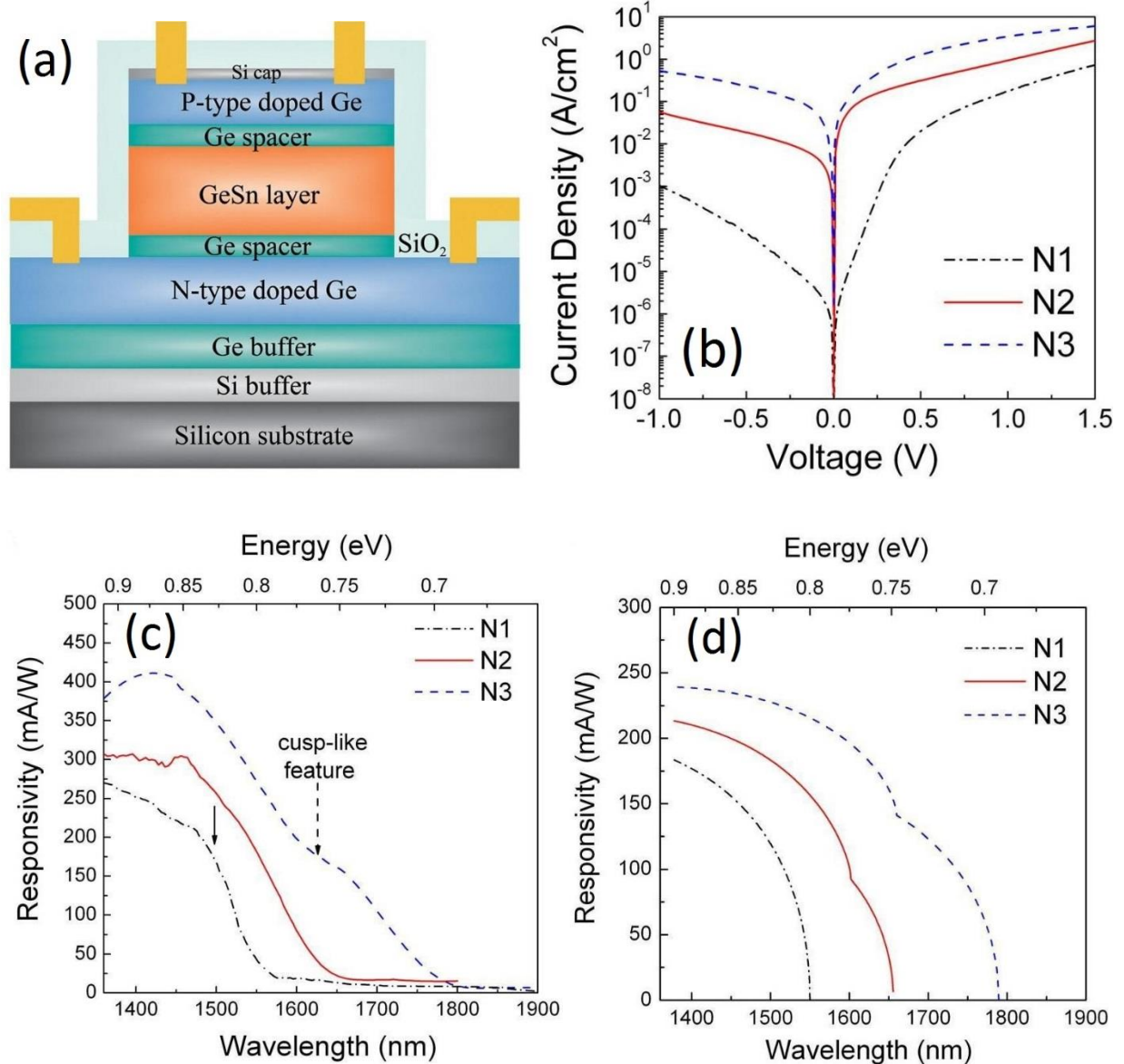


Figure 1. (a) A cross-sectional schematic of the GeSn p-i-n photodiode. (b) Dark I-V characteristics of the three samples. (c) Spectral response of the samples measured at zero bias. (d) Calculated responsivity of the samples.

Three samples were grown on an n-type Si (001) wafer using solid source molecular beam epitaxy with a low temperature growth [9, 13]. The structure consists of: (a) a 100 nm-thick high temperature (HT) Si layer, (b) a 100 nm-thick low temperature (LT) Si layer, (c) a 60 nm-thick Ge layer grown at LT, (d) a strain-relieved 60 nm-thick Ge layer grown at HT, (e) an n-type doped Ge layer with thicknesses of 280 nm, (f) un-doped intrinsic layers of Ge/Ge_{1-x}Sn_x/Ge with thicknesses of 15/300/15 nm, (g) an unstrained p-type doped Ge layer with thicknesses of 100 nm, and (h) a thin Si cap layer of 1 nm. Layers (a) to (d) serve as a virtual substrate for the subsequent growth of the p-i-n DH diode. This structure gives a smaller lattice mismatch than

that occurring between GeSn and a Si substrate. The Ge layers (e) and (g) serve as contact electrodes. Both layers are moderately doped at a nominal concentration of $5 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Three samples were grown. On the first sample (N1), the intrinsic layer (f) consists of only Ge, which serves as a reference for the other two samples (N2, N3) whose Sn compositions in the GeSn layer were determined to be 1.78% (N2) and 3.85% (N3), respectively. The I-V characteristics of the samples measured in a dark environment in Fig. 2(b) exhibits rectifying behavior, which is a diode characteristic. The observed dark currents found in these samples are lower than those reported previously for similar structures. The fact that the dark current of the GeSn diode increases with the increasing Sn content can be attributed to the reduction of the GeSn bandgap, and the increase of defect density of the film.

In order to improve the performance, we have first performed the simulation of plasmonic nanostructures consisting of thin gold films perforated with a two-dimensional subwavelength hole array on top of the p-i-n diode as shown schematically in Fig. 2. The device will be illuminated from the back side of sample and surface plasmons can be created at the interface between the gold thin film and the dielectric layers below. As a result, the optical field gets enhanced in the GeSn active layer.

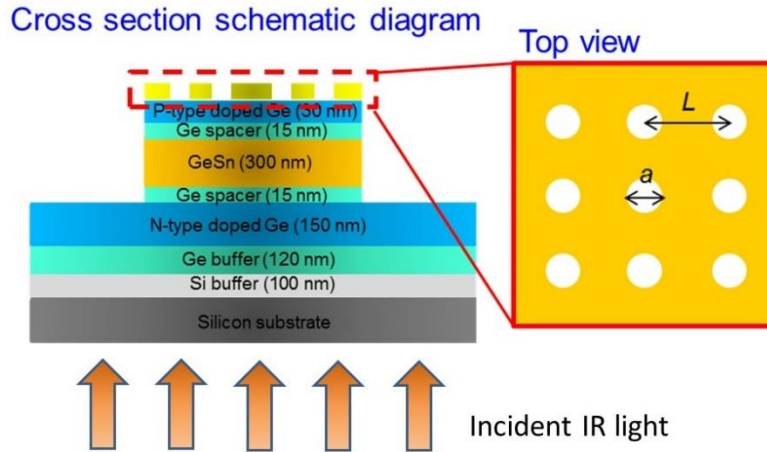


Figure 2. Schematic view of the plasmonic enhanced GeSn p-i-n photodiode with a thin gold film perforated with 2D hole array.

The gold nano-hole array is characterized the period L and nano-hole diameter a , both of which can be tuned to alter the properties of the surface plasmons. Using FDTD simulation software, we have systematically varied both L and a to investigate the change of surface plasmon resonance with the intention to tune it to absorption wavelength of the GeSn active layer. The simulation results are shown in Fig. 3. By changing the period L while keeping $a = 100 \text{ nm}$, we are able to tune the SP resonance shown as the dips in the transmission spectra in Fig. 3(a). By fixing $L = 300 \text{ nm}$ and changing the hole diameter a , we are able to tune the transmission intensity as shown in Fig. 3(b).

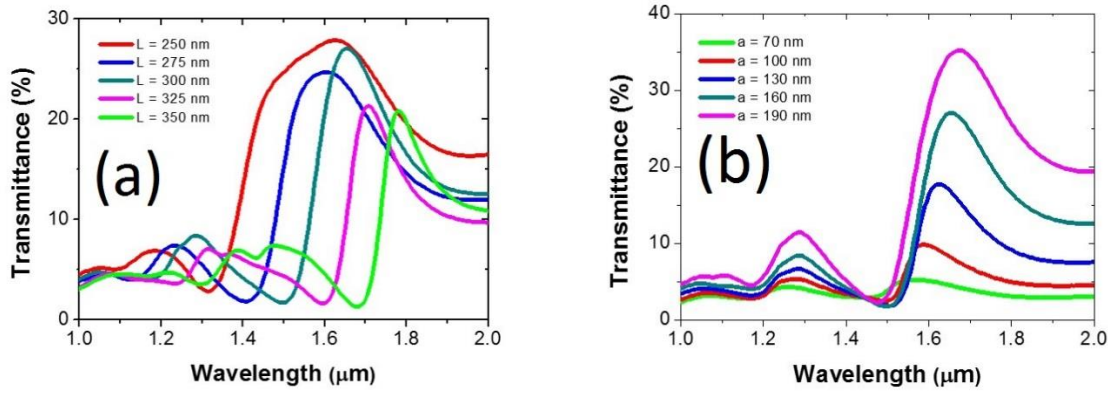


Figure 3. (a) Tuning of the surface plasmon resonance with the hole period with constant $a = 100$ nm. (b) Tuning of the transmission peak with the hole diameter a while fixing $L = 300$ nm.

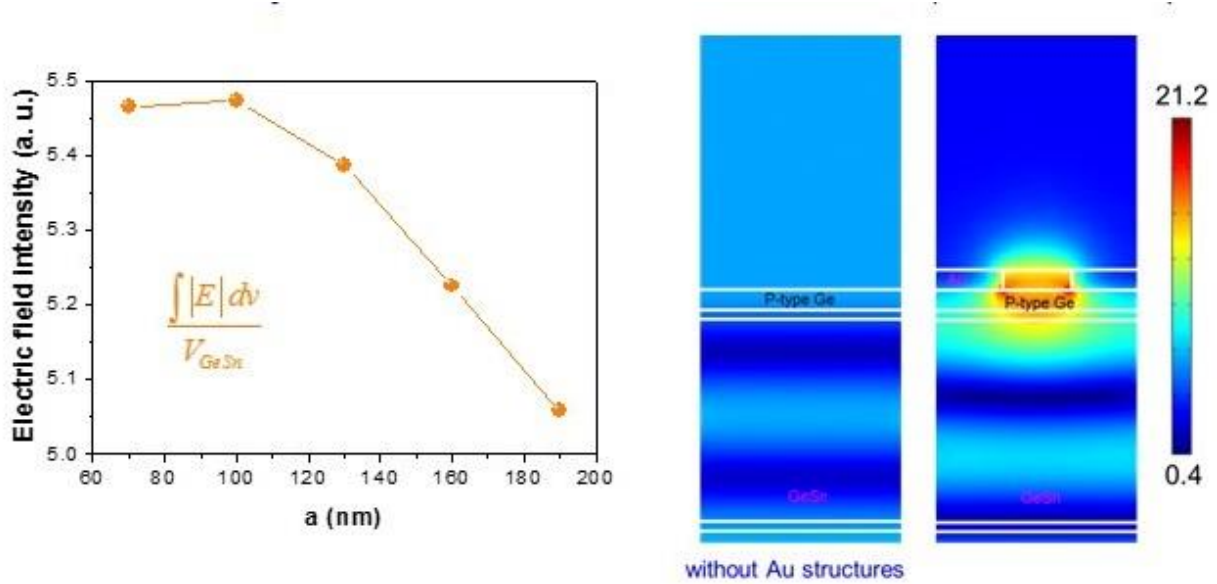


Fig. 4 Field enhancement factor as a function of the hole diameter with fixed hole period and surface plasmon profile at $a = 100$ nm.

We have chosen the gold structure with $L = 300$ nm for plasmonic enhancement and calculated its electric field enhancement as function of the hole diameter which shows that maximum field enhancement is achieved at $a = 100$ nm as shown in Fig. 4 along with its surface plasmon mode profile. Such profile is compared to the same dielectric layers without the gold film on top. Significant field enhancement is obtained. In addition, the surface plasmon mode profile suggests that the mode extends into the GeSn active region where absorption takes place.

We subsequently implemented this structure on a GeSn p-i-n photodiode. Following the deposition of a gold thin film, the nanoholes are milled using a focused-ion beam (FIB) system

(FEI Helios 600 NanoLab) through a collaboration with Prof. D. P. Tsai at Academia Sinica. The beam currents and accelerating voltages are 40 pA and 30 keV, respectively. The target diameter and period of nanoholes are 100 nm and 300 nm, respectively. The fabricated gold film with holes is shown in Fig.5(a). Four such patches, each of $50 \times 50 \mu\text{m}^2$, are made inside the top ring contact of the photodiode with the attempt to fill in as much of the detector area as possible. Three sets of samples are made for comparison. One as is (control sample) without any metal on top, another with gold film but no pattern, the third with the gold film with 2D nanohole array of $L = 300\text{nm}$ and $a = 100\text{nm}$. We have measured their photocurrents under the same illumination condition for comparison. The result is shown in Fig. 5(b). Among the three samples, relative to the control sample, the sample with gold film on top but without hole pattern showed deteriorating performance, the sample with the patterned gold thin film demonstrated better performance as expected.

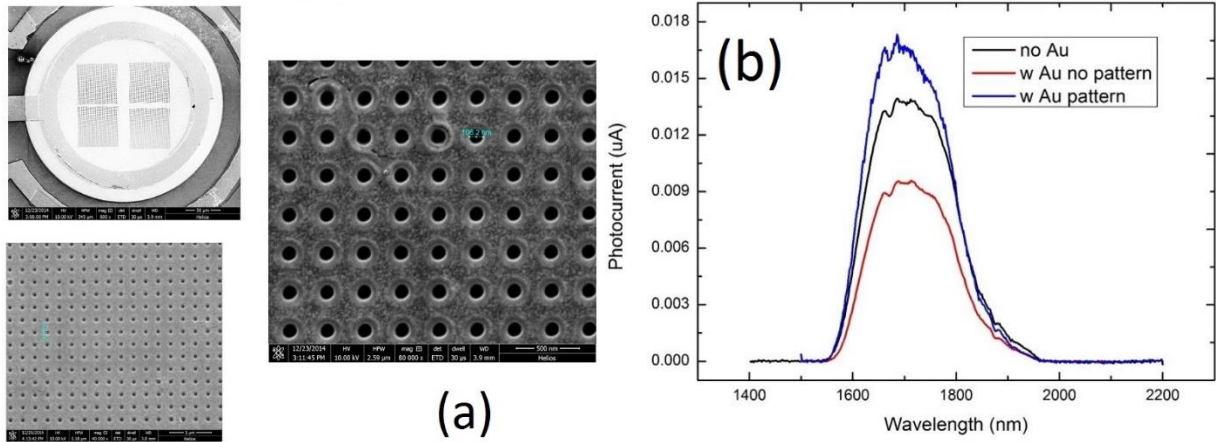


Figure 5. (a) Image of patterned gold thin film fabricated with the FIB on top of the GeSn photodiode. (a) Photocurrent of three samples: one as is without gold film on top, another with un-patterned gold film, the third with patterned gold film.

In summary, we have investigated the surface plasmon enhancement of the GeSn p-i-n photodiode using gold metal nanostructures. We have conducted numerical simulation of the plasmonic structure of 2D nano-hole array to tune the surface plasmon resonance into the absorption range of the GeSn active layer. Such a structure is fabricated using FIB on a previously made photodiode for feasibility demonstration. The result indicates that the photocurrent of the diode can indeed be enhanced with the plasmonic structure on top. Within the time span of this project, we have completed one iteration of the process that includes design, fabrication, and characterization. There is room to improve and future optimization of the design and fabrication should yield more improvement.

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Project Metrics

A. List of Publications

1. H. Tran, W. Du, S. A. Ghetmiri, A. Mosleh, G. Sun, R. A. Soref, J. Margetis, J. Tolle, B. Li, H. A. Naseem, and S.-Q. Yu "Absorption coefficient and refractive index studies of Ge_{1-x}Sn_x alloys towards Si photonics device applications," submitted to *Journal of Applied Physics* (October 2015)
2. C. Chang, H. Li, T. P. Chen, W. K. Tseng, H. H. Cheng, C. T. Ko, C. Y. Hsieh, M. J. Chen, and G. Sun, "The strain dependence of Ge_{0.917}Sn_{0.083} Raman shift," accepted to *Thin Solid Films*
3. Y.-W. Huang, W. T. Chen, W.-Y. Tsai, P. C. Wu, C.-M. Wang, G. Sun, and D. P. Tsai, "Aluminum plasmonic multi-color meta-hologram," *Nano Letters* **15**, 3122–3127 (2015)
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films on Si using a cold-wall ultra-high-vacuum chemical-vapor-deposition system,” **invited paper**, *Frontiers in Materials* **2**, 1-7 (2015)

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B. List of Conference Presentations

1. T. Pham, W. Du, J. Margetis, S. A. Ghetmiri, A. Mosleh, G. Sun, R. A. Soref, J. Tolle, H. A. Naseem, B. Li, and S.-Q. Yu, “Temperature dependent study of Si based GeSn photoconductor,” to be presented at *SPIE Optics + Photonics* (San Diego, August, 2015)
2. S.-Q. Yu, S. A. Ghetmiri, W. Du, J. Margetis, Y. Zhou, A. Mosleh, A. Nazzal, G. Sun, R. A. Soref, J. Tolle, B. Li, H. A. Naseem, “Si based GeSn light emitter: mid-infrared device in Si photonics,” to be presented at *SPIE Optics + Photonics* (San Diego, August, 2015)
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5. D. P. Tsai, P. C. Wu, W. L. Hsu, W. T. Chen, Y. W. Huang, C. Y. Liao, W. Y. Tsai, A. Q. Liu, N. Zheludev, and G. Sun, “Vertical split-ring resonators for plasmon coupling, sensing and metasurface,” **invited talk**, in Resonant Dielectric, Semiconductor and Metallic Nanostructures, 4th Photonics Global Conference (Singapore, June-July 2015)

6. G. Sun, "Plasmonic enhancement of optical absorption, electroluminescence, florescence, and Raman scattering by metal nanoparticles: limits and comparison," **Symposium Keynote** in About Nanoparticles, Metallic Nanostructures and Their Optical Properties XII, *SPIE Optics + Photonics* (San Diego, August, 2014)
7. D. P. Tsai, P. C. Wu, W. T. Chen, K.-Y. Yang, C.-M. Wang, Y.-W. Huang, G. Sun, S. Sun, L. Zhou, A. Q. Liu, "Polarization controlled colorful images reconstructed by reflective metahologram," **invited talk** in Imaging and Cloaking, *SPIE Optics + Photonics* (San Diego, August, 2014)
8. P. C. Wu, W. T. Chen, K.-Y. Yang, C.-M. Wang, Y.-W. Huang, G. Sun, S. Sun, L. Zhou, A. Q. Liu, D. P. Tsai, "Reflected metasurface for polarization-controlled hologram application," in Fabrication, *SPIE Optics + Photonics* (San Diego, August, 2014)
9. W. Du, S. A. Ghetmiri, A. Mosleh, B. R. Conley, L. Huang, A. Nazzal, R. A Soref, G. Sun, J. Tolle, H. A. Naseem, and S.-Q. Yu, "Investigation of Photoluminescence from Ge_{1-x}Sn_x: A CMOS-Compatible Material Grown on Si via CVD," *Proceeding of the Conference on Lasers and Electrooptics (CLEO)*, No. JW2A.57 (San Jose, California, June, 2014)
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C. Collaborations Developed with the Support of the Project

The success of this project builds upon a long history of collaboration between Dr. Greg Sun of UMass Boston and Dr. Henry Cheng of NTU in Taiwan with complementary expertise on this material system and devices dating back almost 10 years.

This funding also allowed Dr. Sun to develop a collaboration with Prof. Q.-S. Yu at University of Arkansas on Sn-based material and device development and with Prof. D. P. Tsai of National Taiwan University on nanophotonics. Both collaborations have benefitted this project on SiGeSn device development and their optical performance enhancement with surface plasmons from metal nanostructures.

Going forward, Dr. Sun has secured collaborations with Drs. Joshua Hendrickson and Justin Cleary, both Research Physicists in the Sensors Directorate (RYDH) of AFRL at Wright-Patterson AFB, for the future development of this project.